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ABSTRACT

This report examines the current demographics of American families and households and how today's families differ from those of the past. Of special interest to educators are those tables providing data concerning children under age 18, i.e., school age children. Specific data from the years 1950, 1970, and 1990 include: (1) the numbers of U.S. households by type; (2) the change in the numbers of families by type; and (3) the numbers of families with children under age 18 by type. Other data examined concern family composition by race and Hispanic origin for 1970, 1980, and 1990; the living arrangements of children under age 18 for 1991; the percentage of children under age 18 living in poverty; the median income of families with children by type of family, race, and ethnicity as of the year 1990; the labor-force participation of women and men compared for the years 1950 through 1990; and the labor force status of married-couple families with children for the years 1975 through 1990. Based on the data, it appears that there are: (1) more married-couple families without children than married-couple families with children; (2) more families with stepchildren; (3) many more one-parent families with children, most of whom are poor; (4) more fathers raising their children alone; and (5) many more mothers in the labor force with, in 1992, more than 6 of 10 families with children having working mothers. (Contains 8 references.) (GLR)

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THE DEMOGRAPHICS of AMERICAN FAMILIES

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by
Janice Hamilton Outtz

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The Foundations' cornerstone effort is the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award Program and National Education Conference, for whose participants this study is initially intended. The Awards Program honors outstanding educators in 20 states across the nation with major financial awards and with unique and on-going opportunities for professional development, chief among them, the annual three-day National Education Conference.

The topic for consideration at the 1993 Milken Family Foundation National Education Conference is family and community involvement in our nation's schools.

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The Demographics of American Families

Janice Hamilton Outtz

March 1993

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Interpretations and conclusions contained in this publication are those of the author. They should not be ascribed to the Institute, the Center, or the Milken Institute for Job and Capital Formation.

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The Demographics of American Families

Introduction

How we define a family is rooted in our own experience and that of those around us. Our individual views are seldom an accurate picture of what is reality for most American families, however. The family has changed so much and so rapidly in recent years that it is difficult for individuals and policy makers to keep up.

With all the recent attention on families and family values, many in the public, especially the media, have tried to define the "typical" American family. The changes in families, however, have been such that there is no longer a "typical" American family, but rather families that fit a range of definitions. American families differ not only by race and ethnicity but also by characteristics such as marital status, labor force participation of family members, types of people in households, and increasingly, whether they have children.

A generation of Americans was raised on television programs such as *"Ozzie and Harriet," Father Knows Best," "Leave It To Beaver,"* and *"The Waltons,"* which were supposed to epitomize the image of the American family. All these television programs involved a breadwinner father, housewife mother, and children. Many Americans today are living in families that do not resemble that model. In fact, **fewer than one in ten families in the United States resemble the *"Ozzie and Harriet"* prototype.**

Just as the United States has become more heterogeneous, so too has the manner in which Americans live. The new generation of family television programs: *"The Cosbys,"* (two-earner, married couple with children); *"Full House,"* (male headed household with children and unrelated adults); *"Murphy*

Brown," (female headed household, working mother); *"Roc,"* (married couple, no children and related adults); and even the *"Golden Girls,"* (mother/adult daughter and unrelated adults) are as diverse as U.S. households themselves.

This report examines the current demographics of American families and households and how today's families differ from those of the past. As compared with 20 to 30 years ago, today's families are much more diverse. There are:

- more nonfamily households;
- fewer married-couple families with children;
- more families with stepchildren;

TECHNICAL NOTE: Definitions

Household - Households and families are not the same thing. A "household" comprises all persons who occupy a house, an apartment or other group of rooms, or a single room that constitutes "separate living quarters." A household includes related family members and all unrelated persons, such as lodgers, foster children, or employees who share the housing unit.

Family - A "family" consists of two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption who reside together in a household. This definition by the U.S. Bureau of the Census does not take into account the increasing number of "families" on the new frontier -- those headed by gay and lesbian parents.

Married-Couple Family - A husband and wife living together in the same household with or without children make up a "married-couple" family.

Single-Parent Family - A female or male with no spouse present who resides with other relatives make a "single-parent" family. Not all single-parent families have children under the age of 18 living with them, however. The focus on single-parent families in this report is on those single-parent families with children under the age of 18.

Nonfamily Households - A household which contains no members who are related. A person living alone or a group of unrelated persons sharing the same housing unit is counted as a nonfamily household.

- many more single-parent families, especially among African Americans;
- major gaps between the income of married-couple families by race and ethnicity and single-parent families;
- more poor children living with their mothers only; and
- more dual-earner families and mothers in the labor force.

Households vs. Families

While all families form households, not all households are families. The number of households in the United States has increased rapidly over the last several decades, from 44 million in 1950 to 93 million in 1990.

The composition of households has changed significantly (see Figure 1).

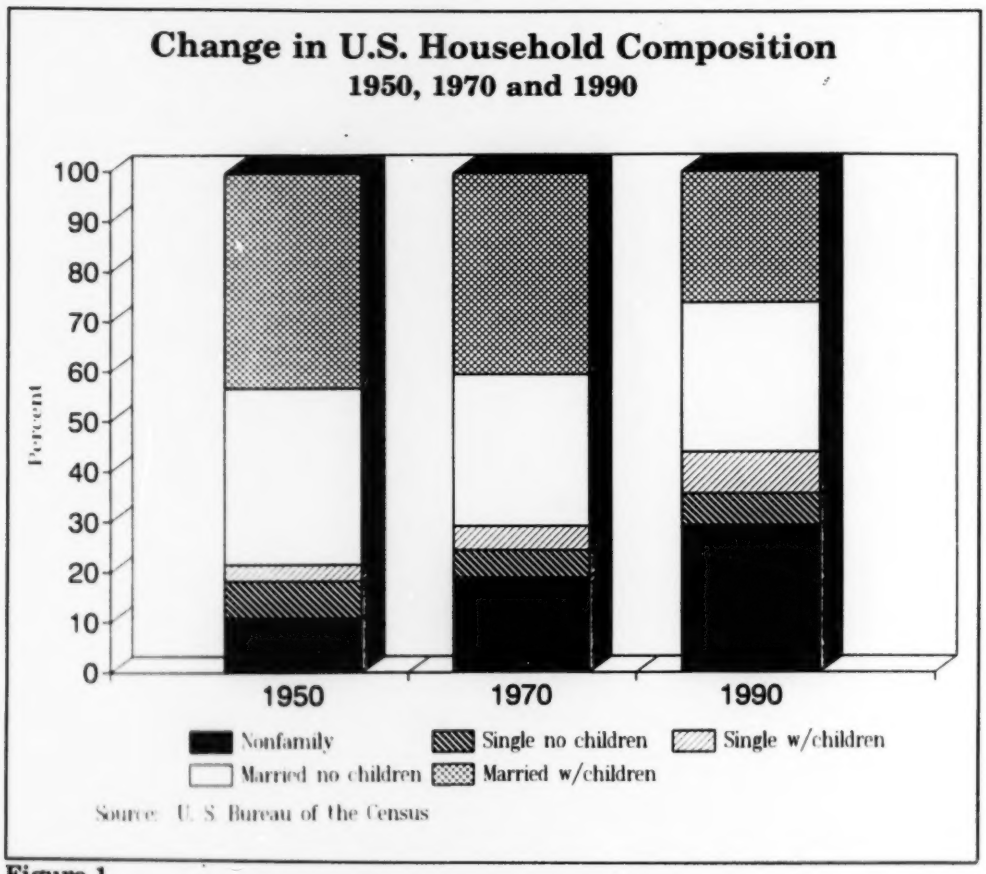

Figure 1

Although most households involve some type of family living arrangement, many do not (see Table 1). In 1950, 11 percent of all households (4.7 million) contained either single persons living alone or persons living together who were not related. By 1990, nonfamily households made up nearly 30 percent of all households (27.3 million). Most of these households were composed of people who lived alone. Others included groups such as college-age youth who share an apartment and cohabiting couples.

The increase of nearly 500 percent between 1950 and 1990 in nonfamily households, from 4.7 million households to over 27 million households, is one of the most dramatic changes to occur during the last five decades. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics[1] (BLS), three trends contribute to the sharp rise in nonfamily households:

- since the 1960s, young adults have increasingly deferred first marriages to older ages and often live away from the

Table 1
U.S. Households by Type, 1950, 1970 and 1990
(000)

Type of Household	1950 Number	1950 Percent of Total[1]	1970 Number	1970 Percent of Total	1990 Number	1990 Percent of Total
Total	43,554	100.0	63,401	100.0	93,347	100.0
Families[2]	38,838	89.2	51456	81.2	66,091	70.8
Married couples	34,075	78.2	44,728	70.6	52,317	56.0
Female Householder[3]	3,594	8.2	5,500	8.7	10,890	11.1
Male Householder[3]	1,169	2.7	1,228	1.9	2,884	3.1
Nonfamily	4,716	10.8	11,945	18.8	27,257	29.2

[1] May not add exactly because of rounding.
[2] Includes families with children under age 18 and those with no children under age 18 at home.
[3] No spouse present
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Household and Family Characteristics: 1990 and 1991.

parental home, either alone or with others;

- among those who have married, divorce is more frequent, often creating two households, of which one is usually a nonfamily household; and finally,
- there has been a sharp rise in the number of widows and widowers who maintain independent nonfamily households.

Furthermore, researchers at the Washington, D.C.-based, Population Reference Bureau say that, given the aging of the U.S. population and current patterns of marriage, divorce, childbearing, and widowhood, nonfamily households are expected to account for a growing share of the housing market well into the 21st century.[2]

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The continued increase in nonfamily households will likely exacerbate the struggle over scarce resources as people (voters) with less stake in children turn away from "communal" interest, e.g. school bond referenda or other expenditures for children's programs, to more "self-interest." As communities realize that today's children are tomorrow's taxpayers and workers, the struggles will lessen.

Family Types

Married Couples

The American family is still very much a part of life in the United States, but it has changed and there are more types. While comprising an ever-shrinking share of households, family households have been undergoing what BLS calls "progressive alterations in character." Between 1950 and 1990, the total number of families increased 70 percent, from nearly 39 million to 66 million. Families made up 71 percent of all households in 1990, down from 89 percent in 1950.

In 1950, married-couple families made up nearly 88 percent of all family households. By 1990, married-couple families were 79 percent of all family

households. What many define as a "traditional" family, a married couple with children under age 18, made up nearly half of all family households (48 percent) in 1950. In 1970, they were the dominant household group, making up 50 percent of all family households. In 1990, no household type was dominant; married-couple families with children made up 37 percent of all family households and just 26 percent of total households.

Most married-couple families with children are intact biological families (77 percent in 1985), according to the Population Reference Bureau, but an increasing number are "blended" families like the TV *"Brady Bunch."* Nineteen percent of all married-couple families had one or more stepchildren, and two percent had one or more adopted children.

Sociologist Paul Glick estimates that one of every three Americans is now a stepparent, a stepchild, a stepsibling, or some other member of a stepfamily. "More than half of Americans today have been, are now, or will eventually be in one or more step situations during their lives," says Glick.[3]

Increases in other types of family households, especially married-couple families without

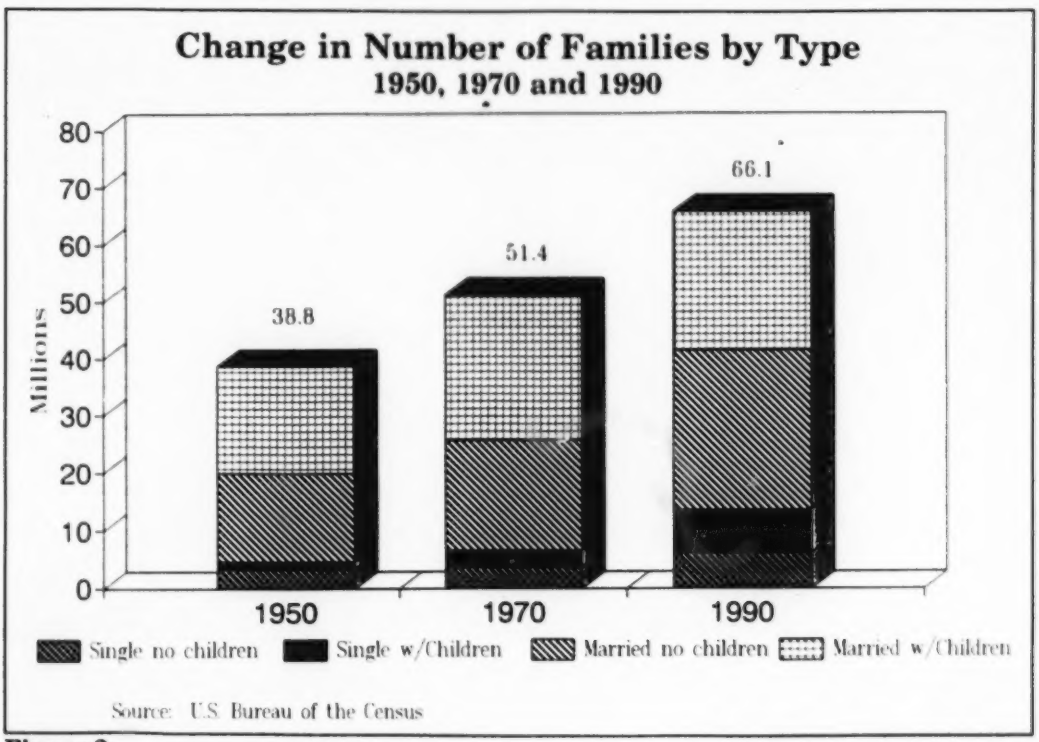

Figure 2

children, are also contributing to replacing any notion of a typical family today (see Figure 2). In 1990, married-couple families without children outnumbered married-couple families with children, 27.8 million households compared to 24.5 million. Between 1950 and 1990, the number of married couples without children increased 81 percent compared to an increase of just 31 percent for married couples with children.

In 1990, married couple-families without children outnumbered married couples with children.

One explanation given for the increase in the number of married couples without children has to do with the number of marriages, which are at an all-time low. Not since the Depression years has the rate of marriages per 100 unmarried women been 5.6. Secondly, today's population, according to BLS, is marrying as late as ever recorded in U.S. history (the median age at first marriage for women was 24 in 1991, and 26 for men) and, once married, is much more likely to divorce. Current projections indicate that half of all marriages in 1970 will end in divorce. More specifically, estimates show that 54 percent of first marriages by women aged 25 to 29 will end in divorce.[4]

Single Parents

The substantial increases in the number of single-parent families is one of the most important recent changes in family composition. Reflecting underlying changes in social attitudes and behavior, many more of today's new mothers are unmarried at the time their children are born than was the case in earlier generations. The annual out-of wedlock birthrate rose from 19.3 births per 1,000 women age 15 to 44 years in 1955, to 26.4 per 1,000 in 1970, to 41.8 per 1,000 in 1989.

What the increase in the *rate* of out of wedlock births means is that a greater proportion of U.S. births are to unmarried women. In 1960, only five percent of all U.S. births were to unmarried women. By 1989, more than one-fourth (27 percent) of all births were to unmarried women, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. As large as the increase was in births to unmarried women between 1960 and 1989, the rate for the United States still trails behind other countries such as Denmark and Sweden, which both had over 40 percent of all live births to unmarried women.

Bearing and raising an out-of wedlock child creates a family unit. Divorce also creates a family unit when children are involved. Current trends suggest that more than half of all marriages formed in the 1970s will end in divorce.

Because many divorces involve children, this trend also means that many more children are living in single-parent homes.

In 1950, there were just 1.5 million families maintained by a single parent, about ninety percent of these were women. By 1990, there were nearly eight million single-parent families, nearly seven million were women.

The largest increase in the number of single-parent families with children under age 18 occurred during the 1970s, from 2.9 million to 5.4 million households. The *rate* of increase slowed to 28 percent during the 1980s, the lowest rate of increase since the 1950s. The dramatic rise in one-parent families is also shown by their increase as a proportion of all families with children. This proportion has more than tripled from seven percent of all families with children in 1950 to 24 percent in 1990 (see Figure 3).

Although women were nearly six times more likely than men to be raising a family alone, there have been substantial increases in the number of families with children under the age of 18 headed by single men. As recently as 1970, there were just 341,000 men raising families alone. By 1990, there were 1.2 million, **an increase of 238 percent**. The increases have been such that single fathers are now one of the fastest-growing segments of the American population. In 1970, men raising children on

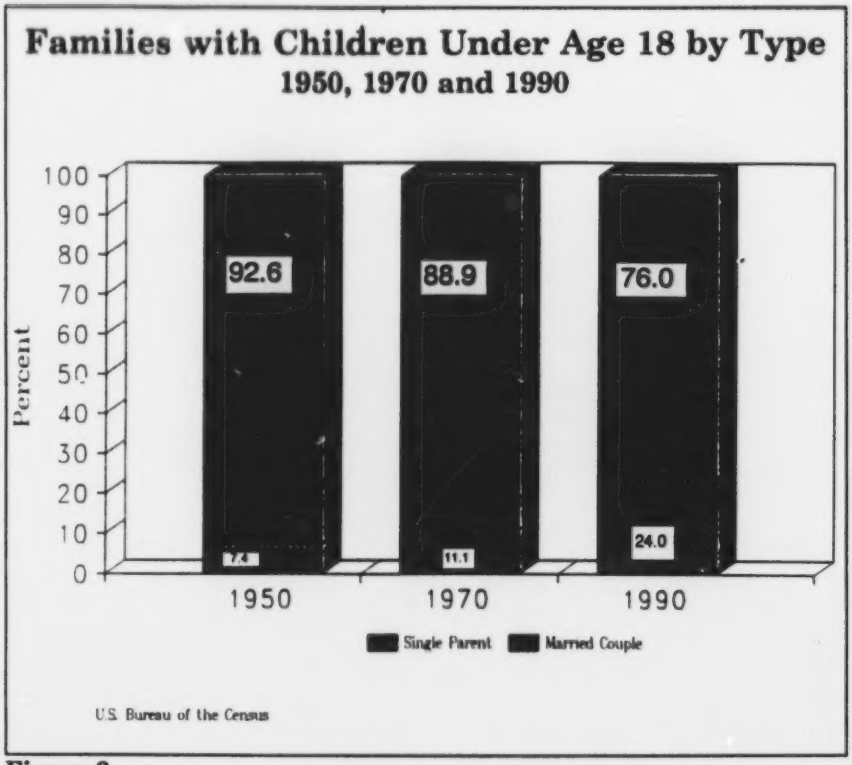

Figure 3

their own made up 10 percent of all single parents. By 1980, they still made up 10 percent, but by 1990, they made up 15 percent of all single parents. About two-thirds of single dads are divorced and about 25 percent have never been married.

Many of these new single fathers are finding that they are having to confront issues such as child care that they have never had to confront before. According to a recent issue of *Newsweek* (December 14, 1992), many single fathers, like single mothers, find that employers aren't always sympathetic to their responsibilities at home. Just as working women with young children have complained that they are overlooked when it comes to career advancement, single fathers say that they are regarded in the same light.

> Fathers raising their children alone are one of the fastest- growing segments of the U.S. population.

Race and Hispanic Origin of Families

One reason that it is so hard to define the "typical" American family is because of the differences that exist among the families of the increasing minority population in the United States. Even with all the changes taking place, most whites, as well as African Americans and Hispanics, still live in family situations. In 1990, 71 percent of all white and African American households and 82 percent of Hispanic households were family households. The similarities stop there, however.

The dominant family households among whites in 1990 were married couples with no children (45 percent). White married-couple families with children made up 38 percent of all family households. This was down from 50 percent in 1970 (see Table 2, next page). Single-parent families with children made up just five percent of all white families.

By contrast, there was no dominant family type among African American families in 1990. Nearly one-third of all African American families were maintained by a single parent, married couples with children, made up 26 percent of all families. Married couples without children made up 21 percent of all African American families.

Married couples with children were the dominant family type

Table 2
Family Composition by Race and Hispanic Origin, 1970, 1980 and 1990
(numbers in thousands, except percent)

	1970		1980		1990	
	Number	% of Total[1]	Number	% of Total[1]	Number	% of Total[1]
WHITE, Total Families	46,166	100.0	52,244	100.0	56,590	100.0
Married Couple:						
with children[2]	23,170	50.2	22,153	42.4	21,579	38.1
no children	17,859	38.7	22,598	43.2	25,402	44.9
Single Parent:						
with children[4]	2,269	4.9	4,008	7.7	5,139	9.1
no children	2,868	6.2	3,485	6.7	4,470	7.9
AFRICAN AMER., Total Families	4,856	100.0	6,184	100.0	7,470	100.0
Married Couple:						
with children[2]	1,965	40.5	1,884	30.5	1,972	26.4
no children	1,352	27.8	1,549	25.0	1,597	21.4
Single Parent:						
with children[2]	969	19.9	1,847	29.9	2405	32.2
no children	570	11.7	904	14.6	1,497	20.0
HISPANIC, Total Families	2,004	100.0	3,030	100.0	4,840	100.0
Married Couple:						
with children[2]	1,615	80.6	1,651	54.5	2,188	45.2
no children			631	20.8	1,207	24.9
Single Parent:						
with children[2]	389	19.4	482	15.9	863	17.8
no children			266	8.8	582	12.0

[1] May not add exactly because of rounding.
[2] Children under age 18.
[3] Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.
Source: N.C.E.S., Youth Indicators, 1991; and U.S. Bureau of the Census, Household and Family Characteristics: 1990 and 1991.

among Hispanic families (45 percent of all families). This was followed by married couples with no children, which made up 25 percent of all families. Families maintained by just one parent made up 18 percent of Hispanic families in 1990. With all three racial and ethnic groups, however, families maintained by one parent have been increasing, with single-parent Hispanic families increasing the fastest between 1980 and 1990 (93 percent).

Living Arrangements of *Children*

One of the biggest consequences of the changes in family composition has to do with the well-being of *children*. Millions of children are doing well in America and millions are living with both parents. Nearly three-fourths of the 65 million children in the U.S. lived with both parents in 1991. This situation differs substantially by race and ethnicity, and is not likely to hold at exactly that level in the near future.

Based on patterns of the last decade, demographers Arthur J. Norton and Paul Glick[5], estimate that six of ten of today's children will live for some time with a single parent, the mother in nearly nine of ten families. In 1991, about one-fourth of U.S. children under age 18 lived with a single parent, an increase of more than 50 percent since 1970 (see Table 3, next page). Nearly two million children lived with neither parent.

Children living with their mothers only are more evident among African Americans. More than half lived with their mothers only in 1991, while 36 percent lived with both parents. White and Hispanic children are less likely than African American children to be living with their mothers only (just 16 percent and 27 percent respectively). Although the overall proportion of children living with their fathers only has increased over the years, the percentage is about the same (three percent) for all three groups: white, African American and Hispanic.

In 1991, children of divorce made up the largest share of children in one-parent families (37 percent), followed by children born to a parent who had never married (33 percent), according to data from the Census Bureau. The proportion of one-parent children who lived with a married, but separated, parent was 24 percent, and those living with a widowed parent was five percent.

There has also been a slight increase in the percentage of children who live with their grandparents. In 1991, five percent of children under the age of 18 lived with their grandparents, up from three percent in 1970. Some of this increase in the number of children living with their

Table 3
Living Arrangements of Children Under Age 18
1991
(in thousands, except percent)

	Total[1]	White	African American	Hispanic[2]
Total Number of Children Under Age 18	65,093 100.0%	51,918 100.0%	10,209 100.0%	7,462 100.0%
Percent Living with:				
Both Parents	71.7	78.5	35.9	66.3
Mother Only	22.4	16.5	54.0	26.6
Father Only	3.1	3.0	3.5	3.2
Other Relative	2.3	1.5	5.5	3.1
No Parent	0.6	0.5	1.0	0.9

[1] Includes some races, not shown separately.
[2] Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1991.

grandparent is, no doubt, attributed to the increase in deaths and incarceration of parents from drug-related incidents. Some of the increase is for economic reasons also. Half of the 3.3 million grandchildren who lived in their grandparents home in 1990, had their mothers also living there.

Many in our society are challenging the various types of living arrangements coming on the frontier. Some of these living arrangements -- particularly those headed by gays and lesbians -- are not recognized as "families" in official data counts, but they are families never-the-less, and they are increasing. Some researchers are indicating that a better definition of what constitutes a family has to do with time spent with the family members, rather than by blood, marriage or adoption ties.

Estimates by the Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition show that currently there are about eight to ten million children being raised by about four million gays and lesbians. Other estimates put the number of children closer to 14 million.

Because many of these *different* types of families are so new, the effects on children are

scarce. One of the first studies of its kind by University of Virginia psychologist, Charlotte J. Patterson, found that "children of lesbian parents are developing very much like children raised by heterosexuals, with no unusual difficulties in behavior, social skills or sexual development."[6] The children in this first study were young so we will have to wait and see what happens in the long run. Although Patterson states that further research is needed as the children grow older, she also believes that it is clear that the quality of love and care and not the sexual orientation of a parent is what is important.

We hear a lot about the effects on children growing up with their mothers and without their fathers and most of what we hear is usually negative. Recent research, however, has brought about a lively debate about the issue. For example, a recent study from Ohio State University demographer, Frank Mott, found that absent fathers were far more active in family households headed by women than is generally thought. In 1986, according to Mott, over one-fourth of African American children who did not live with their fathers, never-the-less, saw them almost every day.[7] That is, according to Mott, three times the rate for similar non-African American children.

Researchers now believe that problems previously thought to be caused by the absence of a father may in fact be related to the loss of his income.

Another recent longitudinal study by the National Survey of Children[8], added fuel to the debate. With this broad-based data, researchers were able to ask many more questions and test a key assumption of previous research: that the two-parent home offered an optimal and largely irreplaceable environment for raising children. By comparing children of divorce in families that are poor with those from families that are well-off and children in fatherless and father-presence homes whose mothers had similar educational background, researchers found that problems previously thought to be caused by the absence of the father may in fact be related to the loss of his income.

Even though the consensus among researchers seems to be that the overall level of risk from family disruption is less than was previously thought, the debate continues about how serious the problems are. There is broad agreement, however, that children of different family structures and the parents who head them are surprisingly adaptable, **given adequate income**. As sociologist Paul Amato from the University of

Nebraska-Lincoln, says "They (families) are different. But that does not mean bad."

Poverty and Family Income

It costs more and more these days to raise a child from birth until age 18, and while money may not buy happiness as the saying goes, research studies indicate that a lack of it *can* be a primary cause of family breakup. A basic societal problem of single parenthood is not only that the child is often deprived of being with both parents, but also that the child is deprived of many basic necessities. The **minimum** cost to provide these basic necessities: housing, food, transportation, clothing, health care, and education (e.g. childcare, babysitting, tuition) for children born in 1990 until they reach age 18 is estimated at $150,000 per child, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Family Economic Research Group. Affluent families will spend almost $300,000.

Providing a decent standard of living for one's family is a struggle for most people. It is an even bigger struggle for single parents. Children of single parents are much more likely than children in intact marriages to be living in poverty. The poverty rate for married-couple families with children was 5.7 percent in 1990, but the rate for families maintained by women with no husband present was nearly six times that rate (33 percent). Very simply, this means that there are more poor children in the U.S.

In 1990, 20 percent of all children (12.7 million) living in families were poor, according to the Bureau of the Census. The percentage of children in poverty has been increasing since the 1970s (see Figure 4, next page).

Most poor children in the United States are white (7.7 million). However, minority children are more likely to be poor: 44 percent of African American children and 38 percent of Hispanic children living in families were poor in 1990.

The proportion of poor children living with their mothers only has risen dramatically, from 24 percent in 1960 to over half (53 percent) in 1990.[9] Poor African American children who lived with their mothers only made up 80 percent of all poor African American children, while 48 percent of all poor Hispanic children lived with their mothers only.

Poverty is a problem for society in general. It puts a child at risk of many social problems. Poor children are much more likely to have been born at low weight, develop health problems, drop out of school, and suffer from neglect and abuse. A child growing up in a poor family is clearly less likely to get a good education than is a child growing up in a middle-class family. Without a good education,

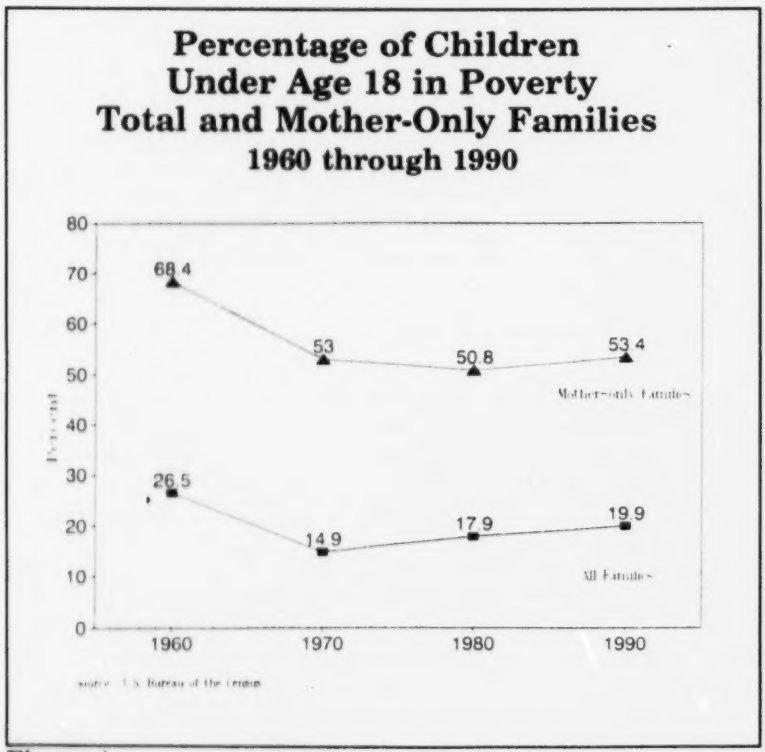

Figure 4

Table 4
Median Income of Families with Children by Type of Families, Race and Ethnicity 1990

	Married Couple	Father Only	Mother Only
Total, All Families	$41,260	$25,211	$13,092
White	41,685	26,168	14,868
African American	35,721	20,565	10,306
Hispanic[1]	27,474	20,775	10,474

[1] Persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Money Income of Households, Families and Persons in the U.S.: 1990.

a job that pays enough to get and keep her/him out of poverty is very unlikely and thus, the cycle continues.

The difficulties for mother-only families to provide the basic necessities for their children and get out of poverty is highlighted when their income is compared with that of married-couple families (see Table 4).

The median income in 1990 of women raising their children alone was $13,092 -- half the families have incomes above this level and half have incomes below. This was **$28,000 less** than the median for married-couple families with children and $12,000 less than the median for father-only families. The same pattern held true for mother only families regardless of race and ethnicity. For

every racial and ethnic group, married-couple families with children have substantially higher incomes than mother-only families.

These low incomes in mother-only families regardless of race and ethnicity are indicative of the findings of a recent report on one-parent families to the U.S. Congress from the General Accounting Office (GAO). They found that even if poor mothers obtained full-time jobs at their potential wage rates, many would remain near or below the poverty level. (The poverty level for a family of three, a mother and two children for example, was $10,419 in 1990.)

The GAO study also found that mother-only families face other problems such as: low educational attainment; vulnerability to layoffs and other work interruptions; lack of important fringe benefits such as paid sick leave and health insurance; and relatively high expenses for child care. Another problem that is not often discussed is the cost for transportation. The cost for dropping a child off at day care plus getting to work or to the job training program are high in terms of both money and time, even when using public transportation. All of these factors threaten the well-being of poor children, but housing is at the heart of the matter.

Because of low incomes, housing, a fundamental necessity, is an increasing problem for poor families. Single parents spend a greater share of their income on housing than married-couple families, (24 percent and 19 percent, respectively). They are increasingly likely to share a home with someone else who owns or rents. In 1989, there were two million "subfamilies" --families living with others-- and 74 percent shared a home with another family or individual that they were related to. Most often these subfamilies are never-married, young mothers (median age of 26) who have not completed high school.

The Family and Work

One of the most significant factors contributing to family diversity is the change in who works in the family. Women of all races, regardless of marital status and whether they have children, realize that working outside the home and being a wife and mother are not mutually exclusive. Since the 1950s, women's labor force participation rates (the percentage over age 16 who are either working or looking for work) have skyrocketed, while the labor force participation rates for men have decreased (see Figure 5, next page). Experts writing about the increase in women's labor force participation have called it a "subtle revolution"

Figure 5

and "the most outstanding phenomenon of our century." Sixty percent of the increase in overall employment over the past 30 years is due to women. Women with children account for much of the increase.

Wives and mothers work primarily for economic reasons. Many increasingly also work to fulfill career goals. Their incomes contribute substantially to the family's overall income. The median income in 1990 of married-couple families when both husband and wife were employed was almost $48,000. The median income of that same type of family when only the husband worked was $33,000. The difference is often enough, even with the eroding of the purchasing power of a family's income, to make many lifestyle changes: purchase a home, send a child to college, etc. A second income has certainly become a necessity for the growing number of families trying to maintain a middle class lifestyle.

The traditional family model of the past of father in the labor force, mother at home has declined steadily and over a long period of time. In 1975, according to BLS, 53 percent of all married-couple families with children consisted of that old traditional model, while 43 percent consisted of dual-worker families. By 1990, 31 percent of married-couple families with children (7.7 million) fit that old model, while nearly twice as many (15.8 million) married-couple families with children did not (see Figure 6, next page). Unpublished

Figure 6

data from BLS shows that this trend is continuing. **In 1992, 66 percent of all families with children under age 18, had mothers in the labor force.** In married-couple families with children, seven of ten had mothers in the labor force.

No longer is there a huge gap between the percentage of married minority mothers and married white mothers who are in the labor force. In 1975, 58 percent of all African American wives with children under the age of 18 were in the labor force compared to just 44 percent for similar white women. By 1990, the gap had narrowed considerably to 76 percent and 66 percent respectively.

The percentage of married mothers with preschool-age children who are in labor force has also risen, according to data from the Census Bureau. In 1950, 12 percent of married women with preschool-age children were in the labor force; in 1970, it was 30 percent. In 1990, nearly six of ten were in the labor force.

The Realities and The Implications

Most Americans live in some type of family. The American family is diverse, there is no "typical" family structure. Instead, there are many

work-family patterns and each pattern, or family type, has different needs.

The family is also dynamic. The married-couple family with children today could be the single-parent family tomorrow. The family with children today could be the "empty nest" tomorrow. The family is "like a patchwork quilt --composed of many patterns yet durable and enduring even when it becomes frayed around the edges," writes the Population Reference Bureau.

Demographic factors suggest a slowing down in the changes in family structure during the 1990s as the baby-boom generation ages. This general aging of the population, experts say, augurs well for a period of comparative stability, if not a slight drift back toward a "traditional" family orientation. Traditional in the future may mean, however, dual-earner family with children. It is unlikely that as more and more women continue to increase their educational attainment and move closer to that "glass ceiling," that they will give up their careers to stay at home to raise their children full time. It is more likely that they will do both. In addition, many more young women starting out today have role models --their working mothers-- that are doing both.

Parents care about their children. Time studies show that parents spend most of their time at work or taking care of family matters. Not all families, whether intact biological, single-parent, blended, multi-generational, or other family types, however, have the resources to do what is necessary to provide the best care for their families. The realities for many are that they have less time and fewer resources. The realities are also that families have changed far more rapidly than policies needed to help have kept up. Even with the comparative stability that is forecast for families, areas of particular societal concern which will continue to require attention are:

- the increases in the number of children in poverty;
- the increases in the number of minority children who are disproportionately poor, (By 2000, one in four school-age children will be from a minority population.);
- the need to strengthen our public schools, (To get out and stay out of poverty, you need a good job. To get a good job, you need a good education.);
- the increase in the need for family and work benefits, such as: jobs that pay enough to provide for a family; child care; flexible work schedules and leave, (Even with the recent passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act, which guarantees a job should a person need to take unpaid

illness or a birth, the truth is that many families can not afford unpaid time off.).

The present definition of families, individuals who are related by blood, marriage or adoption, is no longer representative of many of today's living arrangements. All of us must recognize the diversity of American families as well as the complexities surrounding the needs of this diverse group. Just because the family is *different*, does not mean that it is "bad," or that it is "dysfunctional."

When we talk about family values, we must talk about policies that will help families feed, clothe, house and educate children. How can our society help families do their job better? Can we revise the delivery of social services to be more helpful to families that need them the most? How do we set up family policies in different population densities (rural versus urban versus suburban), racial and ethnic and class combinations, single parent versus other types?

Intergenerational conflicts are likely to increase with an aging population. It is also likely that more children will be raised in highly risky family situation. How can we increase the awareness that each generation is ultimately dependent in their older years on the energy and success of the generation following? Is it possible to develop equitable programs that can separate the interests of different age and family groups? The answer to all of these questions is that we must if we are going to succeed as a community, a state, and a nation.

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3. See Jan Larson, "Understanding Stepfamilies," *American Demographics* (July 1992), p. 37.

4. Levitan, Sar A., et.al. *What's Happening to the American Family? Tensions, Hopes, Realities*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

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6. *The Washington Post*, "For Gay Couples, the Nursery Becomes the New Frontier," (December 20, 1992).

7. See Martha Farnsworth Riche, "The Future of the Family," in *American Demographics*, New York: American Demographics, Inc., March 1991, p.46.

8. *The Washington Post*, "Value of the Conventional Family May Be Overstated, Studies Suggest," (September 21, 1992).

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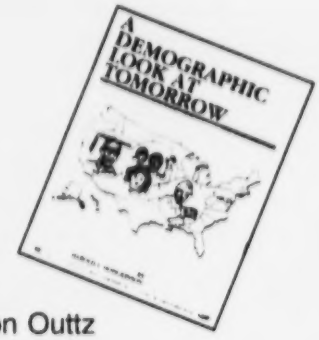

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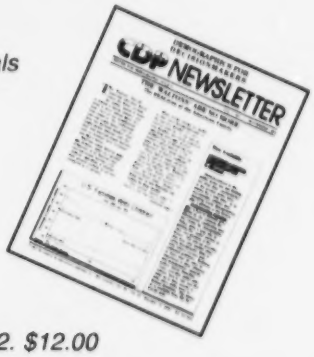

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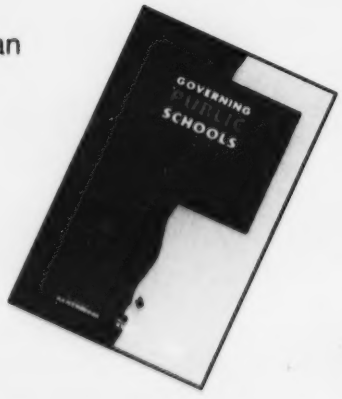

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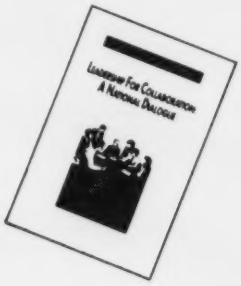
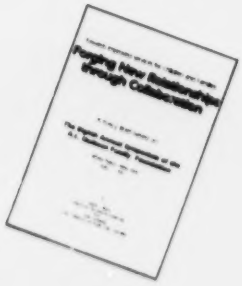


This summary of IEL's first national dialogue on collaborative leadership provides concrete guidance for making collaboratives more effective. Among the issues considered are qualities and skills of collaborative leadership, governing community collaboratives, collaborating for systems change, managing conflict in a collaborative setting, and building collective ownership. *1992. $10.00*

Towards Improved Services for Children and Families: Forging New Relationships through Collaboration by Martin J. Blank and Joan Lombardi. Policy Brief based on the Eighth Annual Symposium of the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation.



This policy brief identifies "supportive relationships" at the heart of effective collaboration to meet the needs of children and families. The brief, which reflects a cross-sector chorus of voices, details the "essential elements" for improved services and highlights the experiences of three successful state programs. *1992. $4.50*

The following monographs were published by the IEL-facilitated Education and Human Services Consortium and are available through IEL.

New Partnerships: Education's Stake in the Family Support Act of 1988

This first statement from the IEL-facilitated Education and Human Services Consortium explores the potential for collaboration among education and welfare agencies in the implementation of the Family Support Act. It provides an overview of this landmark Act and the opportunities it offers for the education and welfare communities to address common concerns. *1988. $3.00*

Serving Children and Families Effectively: How the Past Can Help Chart the Future. by Peter B. Edelman and Beryl A. Radin

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Thinking Collaboratively: Ten Questions and Answers to Help Policy Makers Improve Children's Services by Charles Bruner

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What It Takes: Structuring Interagency Partnerships to Connect Children and Families with Comprehensive Services by Atelia I. Melaville with Martin J. Blank

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CONCLUSION

Most Americans live in some type of "family" living arrangement. The present definition of families -- individuals who are related by blood, marriage or adoption, is no longer representative of many of today's living arrangements. **American families are diverse.** There are:

- **more married-couple families <u>without</u> children than married-couple families with children**; (The old traditional family type, married with children, made up just 37 percent of all families in 1990.)

- **more families with stepchildren**; (One of every three Americans is now a stepparent, a stepchild, a stepsibling, or some other member of a stepfamily.)

- **many more single-parent families with children**, most of whom are poor; (More than half of all children living in mother-only families were poor in 1990.)

- **more fathers raising their children alone;** (Although women were nearly six times more likely than men to be raising a family alone, fathers raising their children alone are one of the fastest-growing segments of the U.S. population.)

- **many more mothers in the labor force**; in 1992, more than six of ten families with children had working mothers.

Many families are doing well, but some are struggling. We must recognize the diversity of American families as well as the complexities surrounding the needs of this diverse group. The realities for many parents are that they have less time and fewer resources. The realities are also that families have changed far more rapidly than policies needed to help have kept up.

When we talk about family values, we must talk about policies that will help families feed, clothe, house and educate children. We must also talk about jobs that will pay a decent wage. How can our society help families do their job better? Can we revise the delivery of social services to be more helpful to families that need them the most? Intergenerational conflicts are likely to increase with an aging population. It is also likely that more children will be raised in highly risky family situations. How can we increase the awareness that each generation is ultimately dependent in their older years on the energy and success of the generation following? The answer to all of these questions is that we must, if this nation is going to succeed.

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